



Personal Creation in Hollywood: Can It Be Done?

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Film Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 3, Special Issue on Hollywood. (Spring, 1962), pp. 16-34.

Stable URL:

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A DISCUSSION:

Personal Creation in Hollywood: Can It Be Done?

In an attempt to illuminate the creative situation confronted by the serious film-maker in Hollywood, "Film Quarterly" assembled a group whose members represent a variety of situations in the industry and approaches to the industry. Fred Zinnemann is an established director with a record of many fine films behind him. John Houseman has produced some of the most unusual films to come out of Hollywood. Irvin Kershner, director of "The Hoodlum Priest," is a new director attempting to make films with personal force by working inside the industry or filming abroad. As we go to press, he has announced formation of a producing company. Terry Sanders, who with his brother Denis made "Time Out of War" while studying at UCLA, "Crime and Punishment USA" as an independent venture, and "War Hunt" for United Artists, is seeking ways of making films that matter to him outside Hollywood. Kent Mackenzie made his feature-length documentary, "The Exiles," entirely outside commercial channels and is now hoping to find distribution for it. Gavin Lambert, who came to Hollywood after a brilliant job of editing "Sight & Sound," has written screenplays for "Sons and Lovers" and "The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone" and will soon begin directing a film of his own. To give a critical perspective, we also invited Pauline Kael, who has been writing articles and reviews for this journal, "Sight & Sound," and other publications, and who operated for several years the remarkably successful art house, the Berkeley Cinema Guild. Colin Young, Los Angeles Editor of "Film Quarterly," organized the discussion and prepared the transcript, which is somewhat abridged. The session opened on the general question of why film-makers should choose to work in Hollywood.

HOUSEMAN: Well, why I'm making pictures here rather than anywhere else is answered in a sense by a look at what I'm doing. I've just made *All Fall Down* which is a smallish picture by Hollywood standards—based on a novel by James Lee O'Herlihy, screen play by William Inge. Frankenheimer was the director and we shot about seven-eighths of it here and about one-eighth of it in Key West. Spent a week in

Key West on location. In that sense it was purely a Hollywood picture with a brief location period. Irwin Shaw's *Two Weeks in Another Town* was a much larger picture, a Cinemascope color picture, and that was made about 40 per cent in Rome, simply because the locale was Rome and there was no possible way of shooting it anywhere else. And then the interiors and things we could shoot here were

shot here. The next project is a novel which is really a sort of international Anglo-American novel which we shall probably shoot out of London. There are some New York scenes and some London scenes and the majority of the picture is in Greece. That's *The Cool of the Day*. After that I expect to do another picture here but again with some location work—called *The Alligators*, based on Molly Kazan's one-act play, or rather it's an elaboration and expansion of an idea she had in that play and will be essentially a Hollywood picture although we would shoot 30 or 40 per cent of it in New York and again in Florida. It happens to be laid in Miami and nothing looks quite like Miami except Miami. These are in every sense of the word Hollywood pictures except they aren't all shot in Hollywood.

YOUNG: Are they all MGM studio productions or are they independent?

HOUSEMAN: Nowadays, as you know, we all have independent companies, and we all own quite a high percentage of the net of our pictures. But that's a fiction in a sense—rare is the combination of pictures that ever makes any money under studio conditions. I know I'd be extremely surprised if any two, and they're yoked in twos, if any two make money for me. Really in every sense of the word, except the form of the company, this is really very little different from the old studio operation, except that the studio is no longer in a position to supply you with the casts or the contract people they used to. At Metro, they still have on the whole, extremely good technical facilities—the designers, the cameramen, all those are quite good and though you choose your own it's really a company operation and not an independent venture—that's a fiction. . . .

KAEL: Do you have more freedom operating in this way?

HOUSEMAN: No, not really. But then, generally speaking, nor do independents. My experience has been that you can function sometimes more freely in a fairly loose large organization,

than if you have to account directly to the bankers and the releasing organization. I really don't think there is any black and white of freedom or bondage.

KAEL: Are these pictures you wanted to do?

HOUSEMAN: Oh yes, every one of them.

KAEL: And the casts and writers and so on.

HOUSEMAN: Yes, entirely. But that was also true eight years ago. The only difference which makes it a little more difficult is that a studio like Metro had a stable of actors, some of whom were desirable and some were not; you did not have to take the ones you did not regard as desirable, but you had a kind of insurance against the oppression of MCA and some of the other large agencies. Whereas today studios have almost nobody under contract, so you have no security, you have no advantages in that respect, in working for a major studio. They can deliver no one to you. You must go out and shop just as if you are making an independent picture.

A NOTE ON THE NEXT ISSUE

Even though this *Film Quarterly* contains 72 pages instead of the 64 which our budget normally allows, we have had to postpone many articles and reviews about recent Hollywood films of interest.

We hope to include these next time, in an issue that will also deal at length with films made in New York.

KAEL: Do you have difficulty getting the people you want?

HOUSEMAN: You don't have difficulty, you just have to pay unbelievable prices if the studio decides they need a big name to carry a picture. But that's just as true of the bankers who finance independent pictures, or United Artists, or anybody else. There's simply no difference. In fact I'm not sure that a major studio with multiple product is not able to take a little bit more chance than an independent, which requires the insurance of big-time names

to get financing from a bank. I don't think there is anything to choose between them.

YOUNG: Terry, would you like to say what you've been doing recently?

SANDERS: Well, in September I completed final scenes on *War Hunt* which I produced and my brother Denis directed, with United Artists release and financing. And this picture will get its first test engagements in March and after that go into general release. *War Hunt* was made as one of a group of pictures which supposedly were to be categorized as idea pictures, by United Artists. This meant that stars or budget were not to be the consideration but theoretically if the idea was good, they would go ahead and make it. Naturally the budgets had to be lowish, in the \$250,000 range. Well, a few pictures were produced and apparently the system was not working out. It may have been because Max Youngstein left or the company's philosophy changed and over-all things got much more difficult this year than they were a year or a year and a half ago. However, if this picture does happen to do well commercially, that will open many doors. If it doesn't, it will be a question of starting again, putting things together from scratch, so I can't say yet what I'll be doing next. But, to the question of making pictures in Hollywood and why I'm here, I do live here, I did go to school here, I studied pictures here, I drew heavily on Hollywood, learning and observing, but I do not feel particularly based in Hollywood. *War Hunt* had a Korean locale, during the Korean war, and I certainly would have preferred to go to Korea. And then I am a producer who is very involved in the processes of film-making as a photographer, and I like to handle the film. I like to edit, but I find it extremely difficult in Hollywood to touch the film and get credit for it, and not have to do it by sneaking around corners, which I do not like to do. Hollywood has an atmosphere to work in that is not my favorite atmosphere, and I am looking for other places to make films, not only for the shooting, but also a base of operation, where a film can be edited and all that. I also feel that Holly-

wood with its tremendous talent resources, with its tremendous equipment and technicians—I feel that in the past ten years perhaps the overall quality of that has gone downhill, somewhat due to television. I think the film laboratories are geared for television and not for specific features, special handling that we ordinarily would have demanded on a feature. I again feel that I can work with another base of operations.

YOUNG: Do you think that the United Artists methods of financing and releasing films give you any guarantee that a film will be sold to the audience that you had in mind when you make the picture? Are you at all trepidacious about how they will handle the advertising and releasing of *War Hunt*, for example?

SANDERS: Well, of course, *War Hunt* was only my second feature; I do not have a long record of films behind me, and yet this certainly has been the best experience so far. I respect the people at UA much more than the executives I have met in other studios, but so far as guarantees about how the film is handled, on the second or third or fourth film you do not have any guarantees of anything, you cannot make any demands. You're damn grateful that you got to make the picture. *War Hunt* started out to be a very special film, with a very special point of view about war, and it is. Probably today UA would like to have a more conventional war film and therefore they may try to sell it as a more conventional war film, hoping that maybe it is, but of course the film hasn't changed.

We know that in March it will open in San Diego and in Detroit and in single engagements of this sort. From the reactions on these engagements UA will learn whether the campaign was correct so that then they can open it all over the country. A general release means that they have stopped worrying about it, they have set a campaign and have sent the film out.

KAEL: Will they give your picture any pre-release publicity?

SANDERS: Well, I was a bit worried about it, I must admit. Technically and actually I am

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supposed to be consulted in these matters. There is no question of that. I assure you that there will be some sort of prerelease publicity given to it. There will be screenings for national press in the east, there will undoubtedly be screenings out here.

KAEL: I think it's more important that *you* be assured. I've just seen so many small pictures go down the drain, and simply disappear, and you just don't get a chance to see them.

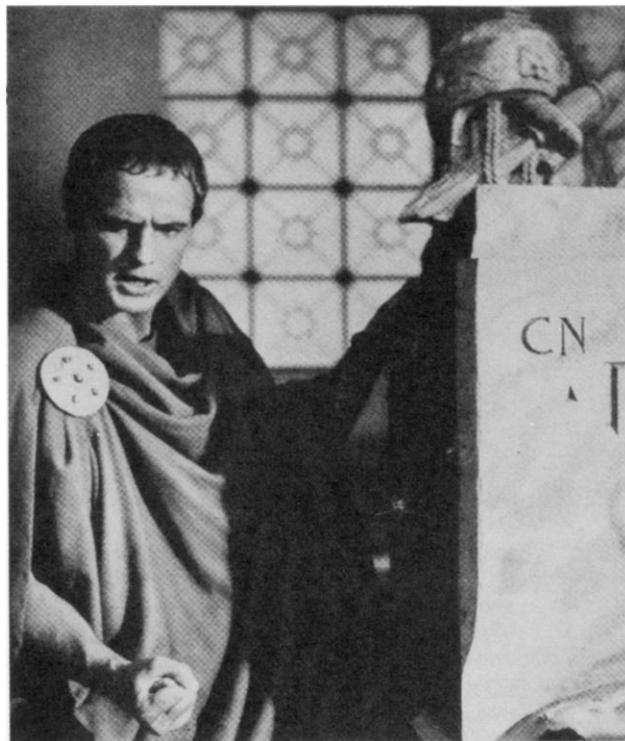
SANDERS: Yes, Stanley Colbert's film never saw the light of day. It was a picture called *The Explosive Generation*, which had as its theme passive resistance on the part of American students. The plot is that a teacher gets fired for giving sex instruction in school, and the students through a campaign of silence get the teacher reinstated.

LAMBERT: Was that picture thrown away, actually? I haven't seen it, but I do remember seeing the title advertised quite a lot here, and it was a steady second feature in the drive-ins.

SANDERS: Yes, but by "thrown away" I mean that if you have set out to make a picture with a certain theme, then you may as well advertise it, or no one will know. If you advertise it as a juvenile delinquency picture. . . .

HOUSEMAN: No one has any control over that—you can make twenty pictures and still have no control. Freddie—I think that probably you have more say than the rest of us; I'd be curious to know for instance how much you really determined the selling of your Australian picture *The Sundowners*.

ZINNEMANN: It varies with studios, and sometimes even with the film. It has to do with what the money people expect of the picture—if it is potentially a big money picture they give you more latitude, but if they don't expect too much they tend to freeze you up. Or listen to you and not do it. At Warner Brothers for instance, I made two pictures. With *The Nun's Story*, they were enormously coöperative, and listened to me—not that I have particularly brilliant ideas for the exploitation, but I did a lot of travelling around and so forth. But on *The Sundowners* they were rather disinter-



Marlon Brando in John Houseman's production of *JULIUS CAESAR*.

ested, not too inclined to do very much, and in a sense I felt that it went down the drain for that reason, commercially. United Artists I find is a different arrangement, because the producers pay for the publicity and United Artists lets them go as far as they want provided they spend their own money. I have found that major studios tend to disregard us—producers and directors. They listen benevolently, and then they do whatever they please.

HOUSEMAN: Occasionally they get confused by a picture and they do turn to you. I know that on *Julius Caesar*, they were so perplexed that they actually allowed me to do a great deal, not in the way of spending money, although some was spent—in the way that audiences, educational groups and so on were approached. The same was true on *Lust for Life*. They were both pictures they were very scared of, and they wanted any kind of help they could get—not that they were willing to

spend too much money on them. However, on *Lust for Life* we did agree to do certain things that would attract "cultural" elements among the public. But then at the same time they started a huge advertising campaign which showed Van Gogh about to rape a nude model. This almost wrecked the good they had done with the other campaign.

ZINNEMANN: They always fall back on that, whenever they get frightened. With *The Sundowners* they had all sorts of "sex in the tent" advertising. You can't help it. It's very sad that many key people in distribution are still 30 years behind us. I would say that most of them have no creative ideas as to the selling of pictures, particularly of unusual pictures. They always fall back on the cliché. I think they alienate an enormous part of the audience. But I would like to comment briefly on what Terry said, because I find it very interesting and very discouraging that what he referred to as "idea films" are not properly presented to the public. To my mind it has something to do with what you termed "general release." They are pictures which are probably special in many ways—they have a special problem and should perhaps be shown to a special audience, and to my mind it would be much wiser to show pictures like that in art theaters and to present them after a very long and loving advertising campaign and let them run a long time to get their public, rather than to throw them out into the huge cold palaces where they disappear after a week. I have seen so many of them go that way. It seems a terrible shame. I have recently seen two pictures made by very young people, one of which is fair and the other I found very exciting. It is a picture made by Tim Whelan, Jr., and Wesley Ruggles, Jr.—both sons of well-known directors. They had a hundred thousand dollars. They went to Hong Kong and made a film, with two Chinese children, showing how these kids come to Hong Kong from the mainland to look for an uncle and do not find him, and slowly get ground under foot. It is a tragic and very beautiful picture, called *Out of the Tiger's Mouth*. They made it with a Filipino camera-

man, using concealed cameras to a large extent—portable Arriflex cameras. Tim Whelan apparently speaks some Chinese and was able to direct in Chinese part of the way, and the picture is very remarkable. But I am convinced that if a film like that is shown in general release, it will disappear in three days. Fortunately this one will be shown in art theaters. And it would seem to me that the best method for young picture-makers is to try for the art theaters if at all possible. I think they would get much more response because a big distributing organization is not geared to deal with new ideas and new approaches.

KAEL: Have young American film-makers ever attempted to approach a foreign-film distributor who does know how to handle a special film? Do they make more by throwing a film in as the lower half of a double bill for a week throughout the country than they would by this other method?

HOUSEMAN: Major companies are making deals now with the art-house people. They have screenings in New York to which they invite the art-house operators, who now comprise quite a substantial circuit, so they can come and make their bids. But art-house operators are not entirely pure either. [Laughter]

KAEL: I was thinking of the distribution companies, who have become very shrewd about promoting certain special films—I mean Astor and some of these companies who have done extraordinary advertising campaigns—but I am puzzled because I am not sure whether a film makes more money that way or not. I think that the most incredible statistic I saw for last year was that the Fritz Lang picture which played in drive-ins and neighborhood houses—the thing based on *The Tiger of Eshnapur*—had grossed more than any other German film. It did not play in art houses, and it was a terrible piece of *kitsch*, and I understand that it also grossed more than *The Devil's General* which had had a great success in art houses. So I am not sure about the relative economic advantages.

SANDERS: Just think of 8,000 play dates as opposed to 100.

ZINNEMANN: You mean, Terry, that if you had the choice of sending a picture out through United Artists or through the art houses, everything else being equal you would prefer a general United Artists release?

SANDERS: Absolutely, because I want to get my money back. But actually one does not exclude the other—the art house only means to me a kind of special handling—

KAEL: It should mean reaching a different audience—an audience that responds in completely different terms.

SANDERS: Well, eventually something like this will be developed.

KERSHNER: I wonder if we are really talking about the problem. Certainly, anything we do we wish to be exhibited well, publicized well, and certainly get our just rewards, but the problem, I think, is: "Is it possible to make films, idea films or call them what you want, is it possible to make films that would be suitable for art-house release, which means that they would have to be comparable to some of the fine foreign pictures and would be, let's say, good enough (in quotes) to go into general release?" Not *can* this be done, but can this be done with the kind of material that we feel is right for this, when we have to get money in the \$200,000 class and make them in competition with Hollywood films which cost \$1,200,000 or more. How do you make a film which is entertaining, which has ideas, which is let's say adult, which doesn't depend on violence for its shock, doesn't depend on sex for its excitement—how do you create this type of drama for \$200,000 when there's no time to play, to waste, to take a chance, to do all the things that an artist has to do to make a film. I think that this is the real problem.

YOUNG: Well, part of the reason that this is a problem is that the person making a film for \$200,000 has to work with substantially the same union contract as the person making a \$4,000,000 picture. This means that although

he may wish to spend a certain amount of time shooting his film he is bound by contractual agreements to divide his money into a certain number of days according to the unions' specifications. The unions do not recognize, it seems, a sliding scale in original budget, and this means that the film-maker is predisposed to choose films which are easy to shoot in a short amount of time, and this does not allow for the kind of exploration you are talking about.

ZINNEMANN: The unions give you no relief of any sort? [Noes] Do you try to work without them?

KERSHNER: Well, of course, with a certain kind of film you have to—you shoot, you edit yourself, you act as your own art director. You certainly learn to do this in documentary, and for years I did this in documentary, and I have tried to do it in other films. But it is still not the answer because at some point you need assistance, at some time you need a fine performer, at some point you want someone's talent, in a craft, to help you, to complement you and this is where you are stopped. Out of the country it is easier. I have found what you can almost call altruism among many union people in Italy. Some people said "Come back and shoot a film here. We will put together a crew of from 12 to 14 people. Don't worry about the money—we'll set up a kitchen, we'll eat, we'll find a place to live," because I mentioned a certain community I wanted to work in, which would be very inexpensive, "just make sure you give us at least six to eight months to do the film." [Laughter]

ZINNEMANN: Yes, well, it happens.

KERSHNER: I had an art director on my last film there [a pilot for television] and he was telling about working on *Il Brigante*, the film by Castellani; he said that for one year he struggled with this thing, he acted as make-up man, he was the art director, he did some lighting, he did some of the costuming, he actually built a tremendous ramp, with which it was possible to do beautiful crane shots that went on forever—you know one of those things that makes a film-maker just feel good . . . the

aesthetic of movement. He said that he worked for a year on the film, and when they had finished they had built part of a village and a village square in southern Italy, they all got together and added the fourth walls to the different buildings, and they are now being lived in, and this was part of the pleasure—they all were sick, they all worked so hard.

I asked them how the film worked out? He said, "Oh, it made a great deal of money." "Ahhh," I said "Did you get a piece of it?" and he said no. "Didn't you expect it?" I asked. And again—"Oh no, we worked, we got paid, we got what we wanted, but we had a marvellous experience—it was the most exciting period of my life." Now here's a man who loves film and this was shared by the others. I think it's wonderful.

ZINNEMANN: Yes, it's marvellous.

KERSHNER: I may be an idealist [protests], but I think that we have to get back to the fundamentals—how do we make a superior film; if we have to do it for a budget, how do we make it for the budget. I think we have to compete with the finest material coming in from the rest of the world, and beautiful things are being made throughout the world. The problem is how do we as American film-makers interpret the American scene and not be forced to run away and to see things in other countries with the inane, almost childish, superficial attitude of a person who knows about 200 words of the language—where you cannot even interpret a gesture properly. How do we stay here and interpret the feelings and the smells of a place which is a part of us—this is the problem.

HOUSEMAN: Well, I think current rules and restrictions *do* make it extremely difficult. But I think there *are* ways of outwitting your employers—half of my career has been spent putting things over on employers, all the way from the government to the third floor of MGM, but it is unfortunate that such a thing is necessary. Of course occasionally a miracle happens, and a creative man is able to go off into a corner and come up with something, but it is increas-

ingly difficult.

KAEL: Have any of the unions who are always so angry about runaway production, ever been asked to one of these round-table discussions?

YOUNG: Well, they have an official position and a friendly position. The friendly position would, I think, admit many of the things which we have been saying; the official position, however, says that they cannot do anything about it so long as any of their members are unemployed. And we know that in some cases this, at present, runs to as much as 20 per cent of the available members. Usually I have found that the officials of the locals are extremely reasonable (although people recently have had not much luck with the camera local in Hollywood) but some of the older members are understandably very worried about their own positions, and what emerges, as an official position is an impression of the unions as being completely unaware of changes in the film business all over the world, even in Hollywood. They act as if they have no idea at all that there might be other ways to produce films than those customarily used by the studios here, and they seem oppressively aware, still, of conditions in the earlier years.

HOUSEMAN: But you are dealing there with the situation which the theater has been suffering under for thirty or forty years, which is that there is one across-the-board scale for given types of work. Of course it has been absolutely insane for the theater to be asked to carry scales of wages which are valid for movies—and movies are not able to absorb costs that are legitimate for TV—with its multiple showings, replay systems, and astronomical audiences. But I do not think that the unions as they are presently constituted are in any position to break this up or to adjust their scales to the various conditions prevailing in the different branches of the entertainment business. It would be extremely hard for them to do so, with the best will in the world. It has always been said in the theater that if you could go to the unions and were able to guar-

antee permanence or near-permanence of employment—for example that we could take a crew and guarantee to pay them for eight months in the year—that the union would then give you a concession. But I don't think they would, because once they had made the concession, fly-by-night commercial producers would immediately move in and cite this as an example and demand the same treatment without the guarantees.

YOUNG: I would have thought that that was just a question of arithmetic—that in other words if other parts of the production were known to be costing a large amount of money (the story and the stars, and so on, prices which are admittedly negotiable, but which have at any one time a certain fairly well-known scale) the unions would be perfectly entitled to think that they should be employed at the same scale. If, however, they are offered evidence, that another kind of cast is being put together, and that another kind of budget is being considered, would it not then be possible for them, just as a matter of arithmetic, to claim that they would not be allowing a precedent that could be used against them by more expensive productions?

SANDERS: What about the stage unions? Don't they grant certain concessions?

HOUSEMAN: No—except that in a town like this, where there is so little theater, and the stage unions are so anxious to promote and aid the growth of theater, they give you enormous concessions as compared to New York.

SANDERS: Well, that is probably what Colin was alluding to—that type of coöperation.

YOUNG: The off-Broadway play is not required to maintain an entire complement of union staff—

HOUSEMAN: They pay a Broadway union scale, but they are allowed to employ fewer men. But as these productions become more commercial, the unions screw up their demands.

YOUNG: But that is a matter of arithmetic. As they become more commercial, the unions change their standards.

KERSHNER: I don't think we are dealing with the problem again, which is how to make good pictures, and how to make them inexpensively. And we are talking about pictures for which we will never get a great deal of money—although I don't believe it when I say it. I have read many scripts and many people have brought ideas to me, for so-called idea pictures, so-called superior pictures, art pictures; most of them stink. I mean they are really bad. They are pretentious, they call them poetic often, but they are literary-poetic, not cinematic-poetic. The problem is, right from the beginning: what material are you going to work with and how are you going to develop material that can make possible fine films, true films, contemporary films, films of value, how are you going to do it when the temptations everywhere in the culture are such that they practically prevent you from looking over your right shoulder?

ZINNEMANN: I'd like to try to give you a partial answer to this question. It probably doesn't answer it except in a very small segment, but I can tell you what happened to me personally, because I went through that, it now seems like 400 years ago, but nevertheless it happened. I came here in 1929 from Europe and I learned my trade by being assistant to some wonderful directors, and doing various other things. The time came when I wanted to direct, and it was obviously quite impossible. Granted the circumstances were quite different then. You could only direct through a major studio. By luck I was asked to direct a documentary picture in Mexico [*The Wave*] and I spent a year down there making it, and when I came back, without a job to go to, I couldn't get a job as an assistant because I had been away too long, and people naturally wouldn't give me a job as a director; but eventually a couple of reels of the Mexican film arrived and I showed them to Jack Chertok, head of the shorts department at MGM, and on the strength of these two reels he gave me a chance to direct shorts. Perhaps the best method for a young man to attempt recognition as a director is to



Fred Zinnemann's
MEMBER OF THE WEDDING.

make a picture abroad where these problems don't exist, and come back and present it. Then I think once his identity is established, suddenly things open up for him.

KAEL: Aren't you trying to develop an accident into a general policy?

ZINNEMANN: I don't think so—if I may continue for a minute . . . I am referring again to Tim Whelan and Wesley Ruggles, Jr., who went to Hong Kong and made their picture there—their first crack out of the box. Granted it was done outside of the country, but they brought to it an American point of view, and I think that this picture will definitely put them on the map. I think that they will have much less trouble the next time around. And it is up to them then whether they want to become commercial directors and start capitalizing on their talent immediately as many have done, or whether they will continue making their own kind of pictures. I am trying to say that if abroad you find a situation where you can create a picture which will bring you into focus as a director—this may be an opening wedge. And as I say I offer this in all humility. I think it is one solution which may offer a chance in something which otherwise looks like a rat race.

KAEL: Well, but what kind of industry is this then? I mean you can make a great movie abroad and it can win fifteen prizes, but does anybody know about it?

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LAMBERT: Now they do. Things have changed considerably.

KAEL: Well then—Kent's film [*The Exiles*] has been getting all sorts of festival awards—he can't get a distributor for it yet in this country.

MACKENZIE: Well, of course we are still making some changes.

LAMBERT: Have you tried to get one in Europe—for the usual pattern for films that win awards at the various festivals is that first of all they do well in Europe and then they are bought for America—it is very much a kind of waiting game in the whole art-house field. They don't usually book films and exploit them in a big way until they have not only won an award at a festival but they have also drawn audiences in some foreign country.

MACKENZIE: It was well received at the festivals, but we continually received reports that everyone was asking who made it, where was it from, where could they see it again, and this and that—and we just had no way of handling it. We were all young men working here as technicians, and we had no money to hire a representative, an agent. It went to Venice, Mannheim, Edinburgh, London and San Francisco.

YOUNG: Your film wasn't made with a budget—it wasn't made with money in hand.

MACKENZIE: I think actually that ours is a very unusual case, and we haven't until this point faced any of the things you've been talking about. We just started out. We were concerned with what Irving spoke about earlier—how could you make statements about American culture, with meaning. We didn't know anyone of our age, whom we were in contact with at least, who was doing anything like this. We didn't know anything about audience, the unions, distributors, or any of that—we just said let's make the film. We had no money, but the money turned up, and then the film was finished. [Chorus: "Marvelous!"]

KAEL: But isn't it an extraordinary assumption that if you are struggling to make it here and you make a film in Europe, that *then* there

is a place for you in the industry? Does the industry just wish to make more big spectacles—what room are they going to have for young men anyway?

ZINNEMANN: Well, I think the industry always looks for people who have some sort of distinctive talent—they are hungry for them.

HOUSEMANN: They may not let them *do* the things they hire them for.

LAMBERT: But actually Hollywood has turned down very few people.

KAEL: That's puzzling—you wouldn't think so from the movies you see.

LAMBERT: It is not a question of closed doors—it is that they ask people to work on terms that they don't like, which is a very different thing.

ZINNEMANN: John Cassavetes is another example—fairly recently.

KAEL: Yes, but he's an example in the great tradition of being swallowed up very fast, isn't he—like Kubrick and so many others. The distance between *The Killing* and *Spartacus* is enormous. It means that you've made it, but it also means that you're through.

LAMBERT [and others]: No, I don't think so at all. I don't think you should judge anyone on one film.

KAEL: Yes, that's perhaps unfair—but think of him doing something unusual or interesting now—it's at best a fifty-fifty chance. Once you've dealt in that big a budget and hit it that fast that hard, then you've really made it. Can you go back?

VOICES: Yes, you can go back . . .

KERSHNER: I'd like to answer this from personal experience, which sometimes clarifies. I remember walking on to a set at MGM to do a television pilot. It was the first show that I was to do in TV. My experience up to that point had been in documentary. I had made films in Turkey, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Trans-Jordan and you can imagine the conditions—I'm mentioning these places just so you can imagine the amount of sand I had to get out of the film plane. And then suddenly I walked on to the set

at MGM and I was terribly frightened. There were two tremendous trucks standing there—the largest trucks I have ever seen, with men swarming around, and I sort of didn't know who to ask what, and I still had the feeling that I'd love to take a hand camera, and I'd love to sit on the dolly and I'd like them to pull me as fast as they could while this car came barreling down a eucalyptus grove and then came to a dead halt, but not a *dead* halt like a dolly does, but with all the jerking of a quick stop, and throwing myself on the ground, doing a couple of gyrations, just for this shot. I couldn't figure out how to do it—for here was this beautiful piece of equipment—I had a boom, we had trucks, and generators—we had lights all over the place—it was frightening. But the fear quickly passed, I must say—it was a delight. Coffee was served right on the hour, the sandwiches were first class, the assistance was wonderful, everyone was pleasant as the American technician tends to be, helpful, respectful. But I had a terrible feeling at the end of the first day's shooting that I hadn't got what I wanted, and this gnawed at me on the second day; but when I ended the picture I thought: "You know, I have been doing things incorrectly, the cheap way, the small way. This is the way to do it. You must have a boom. Everyone knows that you must have a 40-foot boom, so that you can just move down and move in—" And I hated the film. I didn't like what I did—I realized that I didn't shoot it the way I saw it. Because I had learned to see in a particular way. I had learned in documentary to cope with four-wall sets, and to light within four walls, and to *utilize* four walls, to stage within four walls—to fight the resistances—and resistance is always a part of art. Resistance means that you are reacting, that you are playing with, that you are seeing, that you are feeling, that you are pushing yourself against a force which is the force that's always present in any art, to prevent you from expressing something. Today I discover that I am split down the middle. I would like the boom, but I realize that you must have the other. I realize that there are

times in a film when you have to pick up your camera, and tell everybody to go home, and to go away into a corner with just your cameraman and maybe two people and you can shoot whole sections of the film. Or you yourself pick up the camera . . . because of a certain movement you want to get, you feel it and dream it, you see it in your mind and you can't explain it. You should be able to do it, and you *can* do it when you leave Hollywood. The American technician is not unfair, because you can choose your people—you can choose them and they do respect you when you try to do something. They are not stupid. They do react to a script which tries to say something, but in Hollywood I think there's a self-consciousness—the studios are still here, you can see the smoke stacks off in the distance, and so you must leave the area.

But in the end I think the problem comes back to material. The films can be made, if you have the material, and I think that where the idea film-maker gets his material is most relevant.

SANDERS: What do you mean by material?

KERSHNER: By material I mean you can't go out and buy a novel, you can't buy a play that's been proven successful. I think that you have to develop original material, and this is essential, and this is what I think we have to talk about. How do you get original material—how do you get talented people to have faith in you, and you have faith in them and yet work out an arrangement, paying them, and spend as much time as is necessary to work on original material for film.

LAMBERT: If writers are going to be tempted to work speculatively with a director on a project they really want to do, it is very difficult to work in that way unless you really feel that there is some chance of something coming of it. There is nothing psychologically worse than to feel it will be an absolute miracle if anything ever happens. This is one reason why comparatively few talented writers will work that way. The second factor is that unlike many of the film industries in Europe there's no tradition here of a lot of good writers feeling that they

are welcome in the movies. For example in Italy someone like Moravia can work in the movies and feel relatively satisfied with what he does there, in France someone like Marguerite Duras, whom I don't happen to like, is nevertheless kind of invited into the films. Now this doesn't happen here. Of course talent is indeed invited, but what happens when the invitation is accepted is something else. For example Faulkner was here, but worked on nothing, and Nathaniel West worked in films but on B-pictures.

HOUSEMAN: I think that the single most serious problem that Hollywood has faced in the last few years, in the last 15 years, is the search for original film material, and I don't mean by this that it all has to be invented from zero. But inducing a studio to do something that is not already a success in another medium is the greatest single obstacle one has to overcome. And that becomes a vicious circle because then it is not only brand names and successful packages that you're dealing with—the whole style of working in the movie industry becomes conditioned by working on successful material. I know of a good writer who came to this town cracking with the desire to create movies and now ten years later he earns \$150,000 a picture and it would not occur to him to work on material which was not a smash hit in another medium.

SANDERS: His agent is putting him up to it.

HOUSEMAN: This friend of mine doesn't need an agent to tell him.

LAMBERT: I don't think it's a question of agents. Whether a man is an established Hollywood movie writer or an outsider the obstacles to getting a studio to accept let alone encourage original work are enormous. You can get a writer whose credits are approved of, or you can have another kind of writer, but it doesn't make any difference.

HOUSEMAN: But no one wants it, Gavin—the directors don't want it, the backers don't want it.

KERSHNER: But this is where I feel we can say there is hope: I think the directors *do* want

it. I have talked to directors who do want it.

HOUSEMAN: But the majority of directors do not want it.

KERSHNER: I think that the ideal thing is to work with a writer. Let the writer work with a director, not the producer, in the conventional sense of producer as someone who sets a deal and doesn't work creatively. This is what they do in Italy, and in France.

HOUSEMAN: I'll tell you where else it was done. It was done right here for about seven years in television—because television couldn't afford to buy the big successful packages, and had to create original material. The result was that a whole crop of very talented writers and very good young directors all grew up in a tremendous state of excitement, creating almost weekly, under terrible conditions of hurry, and so the work was not always perfect, but there was enormous energy and vitality. Now all these have become fat cats and are all now back in the same pattern, wanting to do only the big pictures. All this has happened in ten years.

KAE: Wasn't *Splendor in the Grass* an original?

HOUSEMAN: Yes, it was.

KAE: Let's pass over that.

HOUSEMAN: There's no inherent virtue in the fact that something is an original.

KAE: No that's just the point I was making—it's the approach to the medium. I do think that Hollywood is sometimes getting the wrong writers—there's probably an enormous number of talented kids, all over the country who simply feel there's no chance to get into movies, so that you are getting tired television hacks, and they are writing the dialogue for great expensive productions.

SANDERS: I don't entirely agree. I think that writing is the one channel for getting into Hollywood. It is the one area that is comparatively open to anyone who can pick up a pencil and paper.

YOUNG: Irvin, some time ago we talked about a picture you wanted to make and you said that you had got some money together from your earnings in television and you had

invested this in a writer to maintain him on some kind of salary to give you a script. Is this what it takes? Is it an economic problem of finding some way *yourself* to get the money together so that it's simply your own personal risk? Or has it not also something to do with the general culture—the attitude towards picture-making in this country, which requires the employer-employee relationship? Going back to what Gavin said, there appears to be this perfectly reasonable unwillingness to spend a great deal of time speculatively developing a script.

LAMBERT: What I meant was not an unwillingness on the part of writers to speculate, but an unwillingness to speculate in movies. A writer willing to speculate would rather go away and write a novel, which he knows he can do his own way, and has a reasonable chance of getting published, than to speculate on writing a movie which may never see the light of day, and for which he may never get any money.

KAE: I know a number of very good writers who were bumming around Hollywood—you know, Graves and Spender and Shorer. Really first-rate writers who get tired of driving cabs, working as bartenders. A young American breaking into the movie industry as a writer has an extraordinarily difficult time.

YOUNG: Well, I wonder if we could approach this from the other end? We could assume that if there were the right kind of material, there would be a desire among some film-makers, even if perhaps not among most, to use such material. Can we talk about the audience's desire to have that kind of material?

HOUSEMAN: Before you get to that there is an extremely characteristic thing, it seems to me, something that has happened, that we all know: think how very few American films, even among the good ones, have a signature. This has something to do with the organization of the studios and the releasing companies. But also, as you were about to say, it has a lot to do with the audience. There is a very strong resistance to individual statements in American pictures

while on the other hand among the worst European picture-makers—they are not all good, God knows, but there is nearly always some kind of personal statement, and this seems very hard to inject into American pictures. I don't know why.

YOUNG: I asked the question about audiences because I think there is considerable evidence that American audiences would like to see that kind of personal statement in American films, and there is not very much evidence that they don't want it. They would much prefer American film-makers' statements in American films than foreign film-makers' statements about foreign subjects.

LAMBERT: When you talk about audiences in this sense, what sort of audiences do you mean?

YOUNG: I mean art-house audiences, more or less, but organized in such a way that they would provide a big enough public for a modestly budgeted film.

LAMBERT: I see, because I would have thought that there was some evidence that this audience did not like the films of Orson Welles, for example.

YOUNG: But that was some time ago.

KAEL: I think that a lot of us who have been in theater management for a number of years find that it is the fault of the distribution rather than of the audience. I, for example, ran *Touch of Evil* six times and packed the house every night of each run. This was by working out my own publicity, and I did the same with *Night of the Hunter*—and all sorts of films that had been completely thrown out into the blue. This was also true of *Member of the Wedding*. I'm sure if *The Hoodlum Priest* were played in repertory art houses now it would do well, because after all people did not get a chance to see it properly.

YOUNG: I agree. There is evidence of this kind now, whereas there was not ten years ago. There are a few exhibitors now who take the pains—and whenever they take the pains there is this response, no matter what part of the country they're working in. They have to create, first of all, an audience and then create a trust

in that audience for their taste so that each new film in that theater does not have to be sold all over again from scratch.

LAMBERT: There I think you are getting to the main thing, which is the creation of an audience. The trouble is that most of the time we are dealing with a machinery that is very lazy and resents having to create an audience and just throws most films out in the same way and at what it conceives to be the same kind of audience.

KAEL: I was struck by the symposium published recently by the *Saturday Review*, in which it was said that the public's interest in the foreign film is largely snobbish. This is being blind. People are interested in these films because they are fresh and new and different and they object to the same old stale American movies. Of course it is snobbish on certain occasions, but there is a genuine interest.

ZINNEMANN: Miss Kael, I was there at that symposium and only two people in the group thought that foreign-film interest was snobbish. Three out of the six felt that foreign films on the whole were very, very good, and said so. I think it's only fair to defend my colleagues; Stanley Kramer, for example, said very strongly how he had responded to European films and Frankenheimer said much the same.

YOUNG: Well, it would seem to me that the experiences of the people around this table indicate that there are certain limitations on their work which have nothing whatsoever to do with audiences' tastes; that the studios' methods of buying material has probably had very little to do with current taste and that the distributors' methods of selling films has nothing to do with tastes. Firstly, is this the case, and secondly, if it is, is it at all possible that film-makers in concert might have some effect on these limitations?

KERSHNER: I think on the whole we are dealing with an audience which has been conditioned to receive certain kinds of material. It is a circle, and the only way to break out of the circle, I think, is through the art house that builds its own audience. Gradually the effect of this will be felt. I talked, for example, to an

art-house owner in St. Louis, a woman, who happened to love films very much. She also packs them in; she takes the trouble to write little brochures, which she mails out on very cheap pulpy paper—she writes why a particular film is significant and does it quite charmingly and naïvely, but she packed them in. I think it has to start on this grass-roots level.

KAEL: I think, in fact, almost every theater in the United States is potentially an art house these days. A tremendous number of small-town theaters are prepared to run foreign films whenever they think there's an audience for them, even occasionally the drive-ins.

LAMBERT: But will they publicize their works in the right way? We should not forget that audiences in Europe are just as preconditioned as audiences here when it comes down to a question of publicity. Many of the films which make millions in the U.S. also make millions abroad. In fact, I think, the biggest money-makers in Italy, for example, are the spectacles. Steve Reeves films, for example, which we see dubbed into English.

HOUSEMAN: This was true until recently but now *La Dolce Vita* is the biggest money grosser in Italy. There was a time when Rossellini's films were dying like dogs and *Quo Vadis*, for example, was making lots of money.

LAMBERT: I meant, simply, that some of the big American spectacle films like *Ben-Hur* which do extremely well in this country have similar successes abroad.

HOUSEMAN: I think Gavin has just put his finger on an extremely important and fairly sinister thing. A great many of the inhibitions on American pictures are erroneous perhaps but nevertheless are rooted in a conviction on the part of the big American companies that the foreigners like simple-minded action pictures and that they do not like realistic pictures of American life.

LAMBERT: It's awfully sad, because if instead of saying, look we can make a \$15,000,000 picture, because we'll get at least half of it back in Europe and elsewhere, if only they could say, we will make a \$300,000 or \$500,000 film be-

cause we can get half of that money back there too. If they would say this it would help a great deal.

YOUNG: Surely the evidence is there that they can say that. Is it not the case that the cheaper, more thoughtful, well-done films, have done quite well in Europe?

LAMBERT: They have done quite well, but of course if you are dealing in purely financial terms, it is far more interesting to spend, say \$5,000,000 on a picture and get back, say, \$20,000,000 if you are a financier, than to put out a low-budget picture, and get back a relatively small amount.

YOUNG: Then again, an exhibitor will prefer a film which will make more money for him. Most exhibitors think that the film has to do all the work; that the names of the cast, or director in the case of a foreign film, will themselves be the attraction, rather than anything he says or does about it. All he has to do is the very minimum of getting that name to the public through the press as an advertisement and he thinks that is all he can do. The thing that undoubtedly is open for change is this assumption he makes, that there is really nothing he can do about a film which will be as important as the names which are associated with it. Because in those cases where an exhibitor has made a personal effort the rewards have been substantial. There are of course a lot of art-house exhibitors who prefer not to see the film they are showing, so they won't be held accountable for it.

HOUSEMAN: That brings up the question that the majority of foreign pictures that we admire and that have done well in this country have been pictures which contain material which an American company, including an American releasing company, would simply not permit you to exhibit. I have just had a week with the Legion of Decency, and let's not underestimate for a moment the terrifyingly stultifying effects of these organized and successful attempts to inhibit any kind of honest statement about American life. They are there to see that you don't make it. Whereas foreign films have a refreshing freedom of comment on social, eth-

ical, and personal relations in the modern world.

LAMBERT: How much do the exceptions prove?

HOUSEMAN: Preminger's exceptions for example [*Moon Is Blue, Man With The Golden Arm*] have not proved a thing.

LAMBERT: Don't they prove something if they make money? For after all one of the major arguments against taking a film out without a code seal is that you cut yourself off from a large part of the audience, and this would come off your returns.

KERSHNER: I wasn't aware of any of this until I actually ran up against it. They will ask you to submit a script before you shoot and they will recommend changes or in certain cases as I discovered they will recommend that you not do the picture, because they won't pass it. I made a little film called *Stakeout On Dope Street*, if you will pardon the title (I wasn't responsible for it)—we took the script to the code office and after reading it they said: Absolutely not! You can not make this picture! We will never pass it—we will condemn it. And I said, But, but, but . . . there is nothing wrong in it. It is very simple—it just mentions a few things which have not been mentioned before, or have not been shown before, and it will be done with such good taste—I was already precensoring, you see, "Good taste"—horrible word. But they said: Don't make it. That's what we recommend. We will never pass this. So I marched out and made it, which of course you have to do—but always precensoring, always saying things like "I hope we can slip by." But I'm not going to give in to them; we made it, brought it up to them, they looked at it and they squirmed, and they said "Well, you did it with good taste." And I knew at that moment that I had failed. [Laughter] But it is so easy to be intimidated, and of course the worst intimidation is the intimidation inside—when you say: "Well, I might get away with it, but why take a chance?" Or you begin to do it and then you say: "Well, I won't go this far, I will not look in this little crevice of life."

LAMBERT: You start being your own censor.

KERSCHNER: That's the worst, that's when you're finished as an artist—but who says we are artists anyway.

YOUNG: We are degenerating into the tacit position that no one at this table is doing what he wants to do.

KAEL: Is that a false assumption?

KERSHNER: Absolutely.

YOUNG: Knowing the people at the table, I consider that this is undoubtedly a false assumption. Fred—you've not yet had an opportunity to say what you are doing at present.

ZINNEMANN: Actually I have been far more interested in what the others were saying, because I thought it was really much more important.

I think that John put it very well, and I concur with what he said. I am making my pictures as I want to make them, to the best of my ability, hoping that the audience will like them, and fortunately for me, in some cases they do. In that sense I don't have the problems that some of you people have. It was simple for me, in the sense that perhaps by luck or by accident I was stubborn enough to fight the front office, and I was tricky enough to be able to get away with it, and with a blind, naïve, stupid persistence insisting on what I wanted to do. And there were times when I was extremely unpopular, and fortunately was stupid enough not even to realize it.

KAEL: Is this not just a little disingenuous? I happen to think that you [Zinnemann] are the greatest director in Hollywood, but I have very little interest in seeing your next picture.

ZINNEMANN: I am not being disingenuous. I am telling you exactly how I feel.

KAEL: But how about the rest of us—do we all feel the same way? [Pause]

LAMBERT: No, I don't feel exactly like that . . . I would qualify that. From my point of view it is not a question of my not doing what I want to do—I think one usually starts out doing what one wants to do, but one does not always end up achieving it, partly because of things which one simply fails to do oneself and partly through external pressures, accidents and

so on. I would not say personally that the problem on the whole is not being able to do, just like that, what one wants to do; it is not being able to do what one wants to do in the way one wants to do it, which is a different thing. You see it is *not* that there is nothing around—there is a great deal around. There are many things which often look very interesting, both from the point of view of the material and the people involved. But in films, not only are so many personalities involved, all the psychological factors are so complex, but also you never quite know when the curtain from New York is going to come down—or wherever that curtain may happen to be pulled from. You can go into things that really look marvellous, from the start. The subject is good, the people around you are good, and then suddenly pressures declare themselves. You have to gauge the odds as well as the material.

YOUNG: Fred—I would be interested in knowing how you decide which film you will do next—what sort of decision is this?

ZINNEMANN: Well, it's probably just the same as happens with John. I read some material, a story, a play or whatever, or I see

something happen, and it moves me, and I think it would make a good movie, and I want to make it. If it does not excite me I would not want to make it. If it does move me, I try to transmit my feelings to the audience. If I am indignant I try to transmit indignation. If it makes me feel compassionate, I try to communicate that feeling, and it is really this transmission of my emotions to my audience which interests me. And therefore I would never consider a project, no matter how successful it is, or how much money it has made, if it doesn't move me. Because then I would not know how to move an audience.

YOUNG: Do you find that given that starting point, which seems to be ideal, do you find that beyond that you are able to make the films in the way you wish to?

ZINNEMANN: I do at the moment, simply because I was fortunate enough to make a few pictures which made money. But I swear to you that if I make two pictures in a row which are flops, the temperature will drop to zero, and I will not be able to make films in that way. It is a purely temporary arrangement. It is a function of the economic success of my

Irvin Kershner's
HOODLUM PRIEST.



pictures. If they think you are a good risk they will give you more latitude. If they think on the other hand that you have slipped, they will give you less latitude. It is that simple.

YOUNG: This latitude is given by those who finance your films, is that right?

ZINNEMANN: Yes, because they have a record of the money pictures have made. If they feel that even although certain ideas of yours appear to be "far out," you have in the past made money with your pictures, and they let you go with the picture.

YOUNG: Where would this pressure show itself?—If for example you made two flops.

ZINNEMANN: It would show itself all the way through. It would become difficult to get a job, and if I got a job I would find suddenly that many actors were wary of working with me. I would find that I would no longer get the sets I wanted, I would get a shorter schedule, a much smaller budget, and so on. I am not being cynical—this is how things are, and I have no quarrel with it. From a certain point of view it probably makes sense.

YOUNG: Well, what part of your judgment about the selection of a subject, which you will film, is an estimate of how the finished film will be taken by an audience?

ZINNEMANN: Perhaps you won't believe me, but I try not to think of that; I can only say that various things that I have tackled have looked very hopeless to people up front, and they needed considerable persuasion. If you will forgive me for talking about myself, in the case of *The Nun's Story*, for instance, we had great difficulty. We went to Paramount with it, and one of the people there said: Who wants to see a documentary about how to be a nun?

YOUNG: I think we might understand this more if we knew of some projects which you had not been able to make, because of this sort of battle with the studios. Do you have any examples of that sort in the last few years?

ZINNEMANN: I can't think of any offhand, but I did lose a couple on the way. I did actually have terribly tough going with a Graham Greene novel, which I thought was very interesting—the last one he did [*Burned-Out Case*],

which I thought was a wonderful book, and I was very very interested in doing that. But I met tremendous resistance to doing it. And I finally had to give up.

KAEL: Well, that helps—because what I would like to question is that a man of your taste and ability, having absolute freedom, would be what you have been doing, and that's where I think that perhaps some of these internal pressures we have been speaking of come into play, the internal censorship. It would be marvellous to be in your position, in this industry, and not have any fears.

ZINNEMANN: But actually you know, I am happy to say that there are quite a number of people who are in that position—for instance John is in that position.

KAEL: Are you?

HOUSEMAN: Yes and no. No one is entirely in that position.

ZINNEMANN: . . . you know Billy Wilder, William Wyler . . . any number are in that position. . . . Stevens.

HOUSEMAN: But I think Wilder, for example, so long as he continues to make comedies [*Some Like It Hot*, *The Apartment*, *One Two Three*] has the freedom, but Wilder might easily come up next week with something quite different, and I think they would be very nervous. For example when he made *Lost Weekend* at Paramount he was condemned . . . exiled, thrown out.

LAMBERT: And particularly when he made *Ace in the Hole*, which was in a way one of his most personal films; that scared everyone.

HOUSEMAN: One of the major differences between ourselves and foreign picture-makers, which we have not mentioned, is that in the history of the arts, you very rarely find a completely favorable creative climate in a period of recession. And unfortunately the American movie industry is not expanding, is not dynamic, but is in a constant condition of retreat and shrinkage. This does not make for a very congenial climate in which to make pictures. In Italy, due to a number of political and economical and cultural reasons, from a very small industry movie-making has burgeoned into a

massive success, from an economic point of view, and within that expanding economy it is comparatively easy to make the kind of pictures you want to make.

LAMBERT: This is absolutely true. As Fred was saying in his own case, he had made a couple of pictures which made money and after that he was given latitude, and could do what he wanted . . . this is a kind of microcosm of the larger thing. When an industry as a whole is doing well, everyone feels confident and more in the mood to give opportunity.

HOUSEMAN: Yes—and expanding. The industry is doing, in a sense, perfectly well, but for the wrong reasons. Also—I don't think this is true of you, but I think it is true of a lot of us—I am not sure that we have the nerve, or the integrity, or the willingness to go through what some of these people have gone through. For example, I have a friend who worked with Fellini on *La Dolce Vita* and the fact is that Fellini didn't eat very well for about two and a half years when he was peddling the idea for the film from one crooked financier to another. He finally found one, and as you perhaps know he has hardly made a nickel on this—the biggest money-maker in the history of Italian films, and he made no more than his original salary. But the point is that he was willing for two and a half years to earn nothing while he stayed at home fretting until this picture came through. There are very few of us whose standard of living would permit us to go through this kind of devotion.

LAMBERT: And then of course you think of someone like Buñuel, who has been sitting it out in various ways for about thirty years. There was a time when he couldn't do a movie at all, he was doing jobs like supervising Spanish versions at MGM.

YOUNG: What effect can a film-maker have on a film if he doesn't leave it—a director or producer? When he sees it through the answer print, what happens when he doesn't let the distributor take over?

ZINNEMANN: Of course you *can* get the contractual right of two previews, and if you get

this you are over the hill because it means you have two successive previews, in which the picture is cut exactly the way you want it, and after two previews you are usually close to home.

HOUSEMAN: You have to fight to put it into your contract. They will resist like mad. . . .

ZINNEMANN: It is a question of how badly they want you.

LAMBERT: I didn't know that—I thought directors were limited to the right of first cut. [General babble, the sense of which is that the right of first cut has become more or less meaningless, since in certain cases the film was projected only for the director and his editor, and was then put back into dailies for the producer.]

YOUNG: Kent has made a film *The Exiles* which was not at all made by the permission of anyone, except himself. It is not clear to me what happens to such a film when it is finished.

MACKENZIE: Well, it isn't clear to me right now either. We expect to try to get a New York theater opening, to have some distribution for it in Europe. Of course it is never going to make very much money, although there is a possibility of a television sale in this country, since it is more of a documentary than a theatrical picture.

LAMBERT: How long is it?

MACKENZIE: 77 minutes at present, but it will probably be around 72 when we're finished. But I have felt throughout this whole discussion that I must associate with a different circle than most of you. I am not of Hollywood, although I work in it, and aside from the fact that I owe a lot of money to people in Hollywood, I really don't identify myself with the industry as such, and my feeling about this film is that I can't be concerned about the distributors and the unions and all these things. But I just don't know enough young film-makers who have enough desire to want to do anything—I think we are creating fears, I think we are building these things in our own mind. I may be naïve about this because of course it has taken a terrible toll of me emotionally to

spend four years completing this one film, but I would do it again. I have certainly no desire to worry about any of these other problems. This may be naïve but understand that I only have made one film, and I don't know what's going to come of it yet, but I think it's this inner censorship which bothers me more than anything. I find myself doing it. And I think that the problems I have in distribution today are problems, weaknesses which I put in the film myself. It is an unfinished thing, it is something that a bunch of young guys started four years ago, and as far as I am concerned it is something that is four years old. But I can't allow myself to fear all these things. There are enough young technicians in town right now who don't belong to unions, who don't want to belong to unions, who have worked on low-budget features and all kinds of things—they can do anything technically you might want them to do. They can make any kind of shot you want, other than something which is going to take a great deal of money.

HOUSEMAN: What are you working on now? Because this does become a problem of continuity.

MACKENZIE: Oh, yes, it does. But, in my own case, while trying to put the money together for another film, I work as an editor and at other things, just to survive. But the danger here of course, is what happens to you inwardly, if you can't resist what is going on all the time. I don't know anyone in my circle who wants to make a statement—they all want to get into a position, they all want to be directors, they all want to have Cadillacs or security or something like that.

LAMBERT: But I think your attitude is the

opposite of naïve, it's very shrewd, and absolutely real. I don't think anyone is being truthful who works in the system if they say they have no inner censorship whatsoever. I think we all have it, and the only problem is how far we recognize it, and how far we fight it. You know it cannot but be there, and you cannot go on breathing a kind of panic air and not realize you get a draught down your throat from time to time.

HOUSEMAN: It is partially panic, but it is also greed, because the opportunities are there. As I said, there is a terrible tendency to become nostalgic and yearn for the happy years of the Depression but certainly the terrible struggle within all young, or not so young, creative people, is against the fact that it is now extremely easy to go, even at an early age, into five-figure earnings, and what is your "creative" alternative? This is a problem which we simply did not have when we were beginning. The difference then between being very successful and not so successful was so small that it was a great deal easier to have "integrity" in the thirties than it is today.

[After this point the discussion moved on to a variety of problems concerning university film studies, apprenticeship schemes, and methods of encouraging or subsidizing short-film production in the manner of the British Experimental Film Fund, with moneys derived from the entertainment tax. It is hoped that concrete proposals along these lines can be worked out with industry and union officials in such a manner as to have some political viability, probably in connection with the establishment of an American Film Institute.]